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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major themes of today's editorials were Thursday's parliamentary election, the crisis resulting from increased fuel prices, and the trial of Saddam Hussein.

Analysis: In its back-page editorial, "Alliances with the People," independent Az-Zaman took a shot at political alliances based on narrow interests. The editorial argues that victorious parties should support the Iraqi people before entering political alliances.

Independent Ad-Dustoor stressed in its first-page editorial, entitled "We Need the Force of Law," that the IECI must take strict measures to ensure that its employees will not repeat the same mistakes in future elections. In independent Al-Fourat's second-page editorial, the author vehemently criticizes the government's decision to increase fuel prices. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1](#)A. "Dangerous Practices and Tampering with National Willpower"
(Dar As-Salam, affiliated with the Iraqi Islamic Party, published a front-page unattributed editorial critical of electoral violations throughout the process. The editorial reads in part)

"The Iraqi people turned out in large numbers to vote in the parliamentary elections. But the government's parties' dangerous and harmful practices, which included rigging and tampering with votes, shocked Iraqis. For this reason, Iraqis have started to distrust the legitimacy of the elections. Unfortunately, some political groups seek to gain an [unfair] advantage in the political equation by using illegal methods. They claim false victories by filling ballot boxes with rigged ballots. Rigging and fraud will never result in glory or victory."

[1](#)B. "A Mechanism We Must Respect"
(Al-Bayyan, affiliated with the Islamic Ad-Dawa Party, published a third-page editorial by Zainab Al-Khafaji about appealing the election results. The editorial reads in part)

"The IECI is the only authority that can appeal the results of the election. Nobody can interfere with, or suspect, the IECI's work because it is independent, meaning that it has no affiliation with any specific political group. Those who call for contesting the election results started to accuse the entire electoral process of being rigged and forged. These accusations disrupt the harmony that Iraqis wanted to achieve by holding the election. The IECI will settle this case based on legal procedures. It is unfortunate in this golden period in Iraq to see some groups abandon democratic principles and create chaos in the community. We need new horizons to rebuild our state and we do not want to chase our old, fruitless disagreements."

[1](#)C. "Did the Independent Commission Lose Its Independence?"
(Al-Mashriq, independent, published a seventh-page column by Shamil Abdul Qadir about election violations. The editorial reads in part)

"There is no entirely honest election in the entire world. [President] Bush won the last election after a temporary halt, during which he was accused of rigging votes. The recent Iraqi election also included large scandals of rigging and violation. The preliminary results can be considered a disgraceful violation. It is not right for the

IECI to announce results without studying the violations that were submitted. The ink was very easy to rinse off using any bleaching fluid. We can imagine thousands of voters voting multiple times at locations that were controlled by militias. Many voters in Al-Anbar were not able to cast their votes because there were not enough ballots or polling centers. Moreover, we heard that in Nasiriya an armed group belonging to a large political party set fire to buildings that belonged to Allawi's list. We do not want to accuse anyone, but we had hoped that the IECI would truly be independent. Unfortunately, the IECI has lost its independence in Iraq."

D. "This Morning"

(As-Sabah Al-Jadeed, independent, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Ismael Zayyer, emphasizing the weakness of Saddam's trial. The editorial reads in part)

"We cannot find any justifiable reason for the behavior exhibited in Saddam's court. It seems that the five previous sessions proved that this court is weak-especially with regard to the suspects' violations of the court's orders. The dignity of the court is a very important issue and the judge must punish anyone who violates its rules. But we have noticed the criminal Barazan clearly violating these rules. Today, we give those who killed and displaced millions of Iraqis a chance to enjoy freedom. But for the sake of God, martyrs, and the honor of Iraq, I call on the court to correct its behavior. We want professional judges who understand the huge responsibility they hold on their shoulders."

E. "Mistake"

(As-Sabah, independent, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Muhammad Abdul Jabbar about the government's decision to increase fuel prices. The editorial reads in part)

"The Council of Ministers has made a mistake by announcing its decision to increase fuel prices. It should have prepared the public before coming to this decision. In addition, it should have taken necessary measures to reduce the damage that this decision will do to the nation's poor. The Council of Ministers did not take any measure, perhaps because it was afraid of the people's reactions that could have negatively affected the election. Such a decision needed detailed discussion by the National Assembly. Perhaps people's angry demonstrations against this decision will not annul it, but we hope that this will be a positive lesson for the next government."

F. "Clear Conviction"

(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI, published a third-page editorial by Ali Khalif about Saddam's trial. The editorial reads in part)

"Iraqis watched the dictator's trial and they listened to the profanities that were used by the suspects. Without a doubt, the forthcoming sessions will allow the dictator and his followers to convict themselves without any help. Furthermore, this will prove to the entire world how those suspects dealt with Iraqis. There are some who are still deceived by the dictator and his false slogans. In any case, the forthcoming sessions will reveal the secret of the Ad-Dujail massacre."

KHALILZAD